

2002HANOI02309 - UNCLASSIFIED

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ACTION EAP-00

INFO LOG-00	NP-00	AIT-03	CIAE-00	C-00	DINT-00	DOEE-00
DATE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	FAAE-00	FBIE-00	UTED-00
VC-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	L-00	VCE-00	MOFM-05
MOF-01	AC-01	NSAE-00	OMB-01	PA-00	PER-00	PM-00
PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	IRM-00	SS-00	TEST-00
TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	R-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00
DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/014W		

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FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7613
INFO AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY
AMEMBASSY BEIJING
AMCONSUL CHENGDU
AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU
AMCONSUL SHANGHAI
AMCONSUL SHENYANG
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AIT TAIPEI 0704
ASEAN COLLECTIVE
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI
NSC WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC//ISA/ACHAO//

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STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV, EAP/CM, INR/EAP/SEA

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PBTS PREL PINR CH VM CVR
SUBJECT: PRC-VIETNAM BORDER: GVN COUNTERING
-- PERSISTENT CRITICISM

REF: A. HANOI 2148 B. FBIS SEP200209000081

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. SINCE THE CONCLUSION OF THE NINTH ROUND OF BILATERAL BOUNDARY TALKS WITH THE PRC ON AUGUST 23, THE GVN HAS ENGAGED IN A PUBLIC RELATIONS BLITZ, INCLUDING THE APPARENTLY UNPRECEDENTED PUBLICATION OF THE 1999 LAND BORDER TREATY ON THE INTERNET, TO COUNTER PERSISTENT DOMESTIC CRITICISM THAT IT MADE TOO MANY CONCESSIONS TO THE PRC IN CONCLUDING THAT TREATY. THE TWO SIDES ALSO DISCUSSED THE TONKIN GULF AND SOUTH CHINA SEA AT THE BOUNDARY TALKS. THE 2000 BILATERAL AGREEMENT ON THE TONKIN GULF HAS YET TO BE RATIFIED BY EITHER SIDE. THE GVN'S AWKWARD HANDLING OF THIS ISSUE IS UNLIKELY TO PLACATE THE TREATY'S CRITICS. END SUMMARY.

LAND BORDER - DID THE GVN GIVE AWAY TOO MUCH?

¶12. (SBU) THE PRC AND VIETNAM SHARE A COMMON LAND BORDER OF ABOUT 1,375 KILOMETERS. AMID CONSIDERABLE FANFARE, THE TWO COUNTRIES SIGNED A LAND BORDER TREATY ON THE LAST DAY OF ¶11999. VIETNAM'S NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND THE PRC'S NATIONAL UNCLASSIFIED

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PEOPLE'S CONGRESS RATIFIED THE TREATY THE FOLLOWING YEAR.
DESPITE A STATED GOAL TO PLANT 1,500 BORDER MARKERS OVER THE FOLLOWING THREE YEARS, ONLY FOUR HAVE YET BEEN PUT IN PLACE.

¶13. (SBU) THE GVN AND COMMUNIST PARTY OF VIETNAM (CPV) (ESPECIALLY FORMER CPV GENERAL SECRETARY LE KHA PHIEU) HAVE FACED CONSIDERABLE CRITICISM OVER THE TREATY, MAINLY FROM OVERSEAS VIETNAMESE, BUT ALSO FROM SOME DEMOCRATIC ACTIVISTS INSIDE VIETNAM. REF A PROVIDES TEXT OF A LETTER SENT ON AUGUST 1 BY 20 PROMINENT DISSIDENTS, INCLUDING FORMER PARTY MEMBERS AND MILITARY VETERANS, TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CALLING FOR THE GVN TO PUBLISH THE TREATY, ALONG WITH CALLS FOR MORE DEMOCRACY AND EFFORTS AGAINST CORRUPTION.

¶14. (SBU) PUBLIC CRITICISM HAS FOCUSED ON THE AMOUNT OF LAND CEDED TO THE PRC. IN A MEETING WITH POLOFF ON SEPTEMBER 19, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MFA) CHINA DESK DIRECTOR TRAN DUY HAI DISAGREED WITH THIS CLAIM, STRESSING THAT "BOTH SIDES AGREED TO SPLIT THE DISPUTED AREAS ABOUT

EVENLY." HE CLAIMED THAT THE CRITICISM OF THE TREATY WAS COMING FROM "HOSTILE ELEMENTS TRYING TO SUBVERT THE AGREEMENT."

15. (SBU) THE INSTITUTE OF CHINA STUDIES' DR. NGUYEN HUY QUY SAID SEPARATELY THAT THE CRITICISM IS MOTIVATED BY A COMBINATION OF CONCERN FOR THE NATIONAL INTEREST AND FROM OTHERS, "MOSTLY FROM ABROAD," WHO GENERALLY OPPOSE THE SRV. DR. QUY ADMITTED THAT HE HAD BEEN "SURPRISED" BY THE EXTENT OF INTERNAL CRITICISM, BECAUSE "IT CAN BE DIFFICULT TO EXPRESS THIS TYPE OF DISSENT INSIDE THE COUNTRY." HE OPINED THAT THE TREATY NONETHELESS REPRESENTED A "REASONABLE

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COMPROMISE" AND SHOULD SERVE TO FACILITATE BUSINESS AND POLITICAL CONTACTS IN THE FUTURE.

READ IT ON THE WEB

16. (U) STARTING AROUND THE BEGINNING OF SEPTEMBER, THE STATE-CONTROLLED MEDIA BEGAN A VIGOROUS CAMPAIGN TO DEFEND THE LAND BORDER TREATY. VIETNAM TELEVISION FEATURED A LONG INTERVIEW WITH VICE FOREIGN MINISTER LE CONG PHUNG, THE OFFICIAL IN CHARGE OF THESE BORDER ISSUES AND SOUTHEAST ASIA. IN ADDITION, AN INTERVIEW WITH PHUNG APPEARED IN THE PRINT MEDIA (REF B), ALONG WITH NUMEROUS OTHER ARTICLES DESCRIBING THE "POSITIVE" ASPECTS OF THE TREATY. IN AN APPARENTLY UNPRECEDENTED MOVE, THE GVN ALSO ALLOWED THE CPV'S FLAGSTAFF NEWSPAPER "NHAN DAN" (PEOPLE'S DAILY) TO PUBLISH THE TEXT OF THE TREATY ON ITS VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE WEBSITE. (FBIS PLANS TO TRANSLATE THIS TEXT IN THE NEAR FUTURE.) THE MFA'S HAI SAID THE REASON FOR DOING THIS WAS TO COUNTER "DISINFORMATION COMING FROM OVERSEAS" AND TO SHOW THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE THAT "THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOTHING TO HIDE."

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	MOF-01	AC-01	NSAE-00	OMB-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	SS-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00	T-00
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17. (U) ACCORDING TO A SEPTEMBER 16 MFA PRESS RELEASE AND OTHER PRESS REPORTS, OVER THE COURSE OF THE TREATY NEGOTIATIONS THE TWO SIDES COMPARED THEIR RESPECTIVE MAPS AND FOUND THAT THERE WERE ABOUT 227 SQUARE KILOMETERS IN DISPUTE. VIETNAM AND THE PRC AGREED TO SPLIT THE DIFFERENCE ABOUT EVENLY - 113 SQUARE KILOMETERS TO VIETNAM AND 114 SQUARE KILOMETERS TO THE PRC. THIS PROCEDURE WAS DESCRIBED IN A SEPARATE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING THAT BECAME PART OF THE 1999 TREATY.

SEA ISSUES REMAIN OPEN

18. (SBU) DURING THE AUGUST 2002 BORDER TALKS, THE TWO SIDES CONTINUED DISCUSSION OF SEA BORDER ISSUES. WHILE THE TWO SIDES SIGNED AN ACCORD IN DECEMBER 2000 SETTING OUT TONKIN GULF SEA BORDERS, THIS TREATY HAS NOT YET BEEN RATIFIED BY EITHER SIDE. THE MFA'S HAI SAID "TECHNICAL ISSUES" REMAIN CONCERNING BOTH THE GULF OF TONKIN AND THE FISHERIES AGREEMENTS. THESE CENTER AROUND MARITIME DEMARCACTION AS WELL AS THE NUMBER AND SIZE OF FISHING VESSELS ALLOWED IN THE COMMON FISHING GROUND. ACCORDING TO UNCLASSIFIED

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HAI, THE TWO SIDES HAVE AGREED TO WORK ON THE TECHNICAL ISSUES IN ORDER TO "SPEED UP IMPLEMENTATION." HAI EMPHASIZED THAT BOTH SIDES HAVE AGREED TO "RESPECT THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE OTHER" IN BOTH THE TONKIN GULF AND WHAT THE VIETNAMESE CALL THE EAST SEA (AKA SOUTH CHINA SEA).

COMMENT

19. (SBU) VIETNAM'S OBSESSION WITH CHINA STEMS BOTH FROM HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY FACTORS. THE GVN'S AWKWARD HANDLING OF THE BORDER AGREEMENT -- FIRST, ITS APPARENT RELUCTANCE TO SHARE INFORMATION AT THE TIME OF THE SIGNING AND THE RATIFICATION, AND LATER THIS BELATED EFFORT TO DEMONSTRATE HOW "NORMAL" AND BENEFICIAL THE AGREEMENT IS -- IS AN INDICATION BOTH OF THE SECRETIVE NATURE OF MOST DECISION-MAKING IN VIETNAM AND THE SENSITIVITY ABOUT PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CAVING IN TO ITS LARGE NORTHERN NEIGHBOR. EMBASSY DOUBTS THAT THIS LATEST PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN WILL SATISFY CRITICS OF THE TREATY, AND EXPECTS ACTIVISTS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE VIETNAM TO CONTINUE TO NEEDLE THE GVN ON THIS ISSUE.
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